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ABSTRACT

This study investigated attitudes of educators from both the middle school movement and gifted education, by means of a survey of 400 members of relevant professional organizations. The survey focused on six interest clusters: (1) grouping strategies, (2) identification issues, (3) curriculum modifications, (4) teacher preparation, (5) program evaluation, and (6) the emotional/social needs of gifted students. Opposing attitudes were found for two clusters: first, grouping practices (with educators of the gifted favoring ability grouping and middle school educators opposing such grouping) and second, social development (with only middle school educators seeing the "gifted" label as creating social adjustment problems). On the remaining clusters the groups had the same opinions but differed in how strongly they felt. Educators of gifted students felt more strongly that the regular curriculum was not challenging enough for gifted students, that the programs for gifted students should address the emotional needs of the students, and that middle school teachers need more staff development in the characteristics and needs of gifted students. Educators of the gifted ranked their top three priorities as curriculum, teacher preparation, and appropriate identification while middle school educators selected curriculum, grouping practices, and teacher preparation as most important. The survey form and 24 references are attached. (DB)

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Gifted Education Policy Studies Program

MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY REPORT: IMPACT ON GIFTED STUDENTS

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November, 1992

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MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY REPORT:
IMPACT ON GIFTED STUDENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Gifted Education Policy Studies project on gifted middle grades learners was to investigate current attitudes of educators from both the middle schools movement and gifted education. We believed that cooperation between both groups was needed in planning appropriate services for gifted middle grades students, and yet little information was available to help guide these collaborative efforts. As a first step to understanding the attitudes of educators from both groups, we designed a survey to identify areas of concern and mutual agreement on services for gifted middle grades learners.

The survey focused on six interest clusters: (a) grouping strategies, (b) identification issues, (c) curriculum modifications, (d) teacher preparation, (e) program evaluation, and (f) addressing the social/emotional needs of gifted students. The first section included 23 Likert scale questions reflecting these six areas of concern, which asked participants to rate their opinions from (1)--strongly disagree to (4)--strongly agree; the option of (N)--no opinion was also available. The second section of the survey asked respondents to select their top three concerns (of the six cluster areas) and to rank their selections by priority. The third, and final section invited respondents to provide comments or additional thoughts on the needs of gifted middle grades learners.

We sent the survey to 400 participants; 100 randomly selected from the mailing lists of four professional organizations: The Association for the Gifted (TAG); The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC); the National Middle School Association (NMSA); and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The return rate of 84% showed high interest in the topic and creates added confidence in the findings.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) compared the middle school and gifted education responses on the survey clusters. We split the six original clusters into 10 clusters after examination of item interrelationships. The 10 item groups were: (a) grouping practices, (b) social development, (c) curriculum, (d) program differentiation, (e) emotional support, (f) teacher preparation, (g) identification issues, (h) collaboration, (i) teacher assignments, and (j) program evaluations.

The MANOVA revealed significant differences between the two groups on the clusters; however with the large sample size, which predisposes toward differences, we decided to move to an analysis of <u>effect size</u>, which gives a description of <u>how</u> different the groups really are. Effect size is determined by dividing the differences in group means by the total group standard deviation. An effect size of .8 is considered to be large, .5 is moderate, and .2 is relatively small (Cohen, 1988).

We analyzed the second section of the survey, the ranking of most important issues, by comparing selections made by both groups. We used qualitative analysis to identify themes in the third section and we asked judges to code the comments.

The results indicated that although there were differences between the two groups, most of these differences were in the intensity of agreement and not differences that indicated opposing positions. The two clusters that did elicit opposing responses were "grouping practices," and "social development":

1. Grouping Practices. The summary statement that typified this cluster was:

   GIFTED STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM BEING GROUPED TOGETHER

   This issue showed the widest discrepancy between the groups. Educators from the middle school group felt that gifted students may not benefit from ability grouping where as educators from the gifted group felt that grouping was important to meet the needs of gifted learners. The effect size of 1.76 indicates that these are markedly different viewpoints on this issue, which clearly separated these two groups of educators.

2. Social Development. A summary statement for this cluster was:

   IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AS GIFTED CAUSES SOCIAL DIFFICULTY

   Educators from the middle school agreed with this statement. Their feelings seemed to be that the "gifted" label and accompanying special program often create social adjustment problems for the gifted students. The educators of gifted students disagreed with this statement, feeling that "giftedness" does not necessarily interfere with social development, and that the label and services provided assist gifted students with their social adjustment. An effect size of 1.39 indicated a major separation in the groups.

On the remaining clusters, the differences indicated that the groups had the same opinions on these issues but differed in how strongly they held these opinions.

3. Curriculum. These items addressed whether or not the regular middle school curriculum could meet the needs of gifted students. The summary statement typifying this cluster was:

   THE REGULAR MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IS CHALLENGING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

   Both groups felt that the standard curriculum is not challenging enough for gifted students; however the strength of this perception varied by group. Although the middle school educators disagreed with this statement, the educators of gifted students "strongly" disagreed. With an effect size of 1.07, this difference in intensity seemed important.

4. Program Differentiation. The summary statement for this cluster was:

THE PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR GIFTED STUDENTS COULD BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS

The middle school educators voiced strong agreement with this sentiment, whereas the educators of gifted students expressed mild agreement, feeling that, to some extent, components of the program for gifted students would be good for others as well. The effect size of .89 does indicate that these groups differed in their intensity of agreement with the statement.

5. Emotional Support. The summary statement for this cluster was:

CURRENT PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED ADEQUATELY ADDRESS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

Both groups agreed with this statement. However, the educators of gifted students strongly agreed, feeling that programs for gifted students do, in fact, address the emotional needs of the students and that sufficient social support and attention to their affective development is included in programs for gifted students. The large effect size (.85) indicates that the intensity of feelings differs for the groups.

6. Teacher Preparation. This set of items addressed whether or not teachers of middle grades students have enough preparation to meet the needs of gifted students. The summary statement was:

TEACHERS AT THE MIDDLE GRADES NEED ADDITIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

Both groups agreed with this, with the teachers of gifted students strongly agreeing. The effect size of .64 indicates a moderate difference in the intensity of agreement between the groups. This area seems to be a point of mutual concern and may be a point of future collaboration as well.

7. Identification of Gifted Students. This cluster looked at two issues--the failure of current practices to recognize underachieving gifted students, and the need for student identification in order to assure appropriate services. The summary statement was:

CURRENT IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES NEED TO BE IMPROVED

There was overall agreement in this area. However, the focus was slightly different. The middle school educators felt that current practices overlook many students, whereas the educators of gifted students focused on the need for identification to assure services. The moderate effect size of .59 indicates that the groups reported fairly similar views on these issues.

8. Collaboration Between Regular and Gifted Education. The summary statement was:

LITTLE COLLABORATION TAKES PLACE BETWEEN EDUCATORS IN REGULAR AND GIFTED EDUCATION ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

This area seemed particularly important given the middle schools philosophical emphasis on interdisciplinary units and the inclusion of thinking strategies within the curriculum, Both of these areas have been extensively used in planning differential education for gifted students. The groups agree that little collaboration has taken place, and the effect size (.23) indicated that their feelings are quite similar on this issue. Both groups seem to feel that collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

9. Teacher Assignments. The summary statement was:

THE "BEST" TEACHERS ARE ASSIGNED TO TEACH THE GIFTED STUDENTS

We included cluster because it is a complaint sometimes voiced; however, the group responses indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. Both groups fell in the "no opinion" range, indicating that excellent teachers, as well as poor teachers, can be found in all areas of education. The effect size of .12 indicated no real difference between the groups on this item.

10. Program Evaluation. The summary statement was:

EVALUATION OF GIFTED PROGRAMS HAS BEEN ADEQUATE

Both groups disagreed with this statement, indicating that program evaluation is an area that needs attention, and there was no difference between the groups on this cluster.

On the ranking of most important issues, the groups were also similar. The top three concerns of the middle school educators were: improved curriculum, attention to grouping practices, and teacher preparation. The educators of gifted students ranked curriculum, teacher preparation, and appropriate identification as their top three. When we looked at the ratings for the second most important issue, identification practices emerged for the middle school educators and grouping was included by the gifted education respondents. These results again indicate that we need to pay further attention to appropriate grouping strategies, and that collaborative efforts need to address curriculum differentiation, and teacher preparation as priority areas.

The survey results indicated some clear starting points for communication and collaboration between middle school and gifted education. Although the focus of this report has been on the needs of gifted students and the recommendations made will address their needs; we understand that many of the following suggestions would be appropriate for all middle grade students. The following directions would seem to be warranted:

1. Initiating joint efforts between middle school and gifted educators to provide teacher preparation to ensure that all middle school teachers have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of gifted middle grades students

2. Collaborative interdisciplinary curriculum development with a twofold focus: (a) on strategies to ensure an appropriate pace and challenging level of learning for gifted middle grades learners; and (b) on ways to extend some of the experiences provided through the gifted program to other students who could benefit from them (e.g., activities to enhance problem solving, enrichment field trips, opportunities for independent/interest centered learning)

3. Creating ways, at the building level, to address the affective needs of middle grades gifted students through teaming, counseling programs, and advisee-advisor relationships designed to assist gifted youngsters with their social and emotional growth

4. Exploring a variety of ways to group students for instructional purposes which match the needs of the students and the requirements of the curriculum to ensure challenging experiences for gifted students

5. Designing and using program assessment strategies that can measure the full range and depth of outcomes for gifted students in order to evaluate the effectiveness of services for gifted middle grades learners.

It is reassuring to note that educators from both middle school and gifted backgrounds share many of the same concerns. We believe that if we combine the knowledge and expertise of both groups, the result will be an exciting collaboration that can benefit many students.

Reference

Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

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The Middle School Movement traces its roots back to the Junior High School Movement of the early 1900s with its attempt to address more fully the needs of students during their transition from childhood to young adulthood (Lounsbury & Vars, 1978). It was during the 1960s, however, that the education of preadolescents underwent a refocusing that has now been firmly established as the current Middle School Movement (National Middle Schools Association, 1982). The recognition that children during early adolescence (ages 10-15) face many challenges as they grow to young adulthood is paramount to the current Middle School efforts (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1985).

In an attempt to gain independence and establish autonomy, middle grades youngsters are renegotiating their relationships with parents and adults and focusing their energy on adaptation to various peer groups (Dorman, 1981). The physical changes that preadolescents encounter create further challenges that may tax their social and emotional adjustment (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). With these transitional challenges come a variety of educational needs requiring a greater diversity of educational offerings to accommodate the widened range of developmental progress that preadolescence spans (Dorman, 1981). When we included gifted intellectual abilities as one of the developmental areas of concern, we increase the need for diversity in educational offerings and the task of providing appropriate educational experiences becomes more complex (Rakow, 1989; Tomlinson, 1992; Kulik & Kulik, 1990; Perry & Hoback, 1980).

With the transformation to the "middle school," there has been a shift in the structure of educational programming for gifted middle grades learners, and this shift has, in some cases, been the focus of concern and debate within the educational community (Rakow, 1989; Sicola, 1990; Xenos-Whiston & Leroux, 1992; Allan, 1991;

Epstein, & MacIver, 1990; George, 1988; Oakes, 1985). The tone of these debates has ranged from constructive to hostile, and it seemed for a time that educators from both groups (middle school and gifted education) were drawing the wagons round and preparing to "protect their territories." This response, occurring in spite of the lack of research evidence related to the efficacy of actual practices, has done little to foster productive communication or improve services for gifted middle grades learners (Gallagher, 1991).

One purpose of the Gifted Education Policy Studies Program's project on gifted middle grades learners was to investigate current attitudes of educators from the middle school movement and those in gifted education. In addition to understanding the barriers to effective collaboration, we wished to identify the areas of mutual concern that could be enhanced. As a first step to understanding these attitudes, we designed a survey to identify possible areas of concern and agreement held by professionals from the middle school and gifted education. Through understanding the goals and needs of both educational groups, we can establish communication and collaboration to better meet the needs of gifted middle grades learners.

Method

Development of the Survey

In order to frame out the critical issues related to the education of gifted middle grades learners, we sent an open-ended questionnaire to 25 key people selected from both the middle school movement and gifted education. The questionnaire asked each respondent to identify five areas of concern that needed to be addressed when blending the goals of middle schools and programs for gifted

students (Appendix A). We reviewed responses to these questionnaires to identify the themes that emerged from shared concerns. We identified the following areas of concern:

1. What grouping strategies are most appropriate for gifted middle grades learners?
2. What identification strategies are most appropriate for gifted middle grades students?
3. What curriculum modifications should be made to meet the needs of gifted middle grades students?
4. What steps in the area of teacher preparation should be taken?
5. What kinds of program evaluations should be conducted?
6. What steps should be taken to ensure that social and emotional needs of gifted middle grades students are met?

We used these six areas as the basis for developing and clustering the individual stem items on the survey. We wrote stem items to reflect the areas of concern and compiled a draft survey based on these items. We then sent the draft survey out to the initial respondents of the questionnaire, asking for suggestions for improving the survey instrument.

Survey

The resulting survey (Appendix B) included 23 stem items clustered according to the six areas of concern. A Likert scale response asked participants to rate their opinion on each item from 1--strongly disagree to 4--strongly agree; we also provided the option of N--no opinion. In addition to the 23 scale items, a second section of the survey asked participants to rank the six areas of concern by selecting the three most essential issues and placing these in priority order. The third section consisted of an

open-ended request for additional thoughts and concerns. We invited respondents to use additional paper for longer comments.

Subjects

We randomly selected recipients from each of the mailing lists of four professional organizations: the National Middle School Association; the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Middle School Network; The Association for the Gifted; and the National Association of Gifted Children. We deleted names with foreign addresses and addresses that did not have an individual respondent named, prior to the random selection. As a result of this selection process, we sent the survey to 400 persons.

Procedures

We mailed the survey, a cover letter, and a return address stamped envelope out to the 400 recipients. After five weeks, we sent a second mailing to those who had not responded to the initial request for participation. To compile the survey data, we developed a coding system assigning an identification number to each respondent. We built information on the respondents, the mailing list they were drawn from, their occupation, and geographic location into each identification number.

We coded the stem questions with their Likert scale numbers, with additional codes for missing data and "no opinion." We coded the second section of the survey, which asked for priority ranking of the top three concerns, by letter (A,B,C,D,E,F). We coded the third section of the survey, which invited respondents to express additional thoughts and concerns, according to themes that corresponded to the areas of the survey.

Data Analysis

Part I--Cluster Items. We checked the six item clusters for internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha to ensure that items within each cluster measured the same question. As a result of this analysis, we reclustered some of the items, creating 10 cluster groupings from the original six areas. The regrouping of the clusters provided a more accurate portrait of the questions asked in the survey (for summary statements of clusters and alpha levels see Table 1).

Initially we used a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to compare the middle school and gifted education groups on the item clusters and to check for any interaction effects of occupation (teachers, administrators, others) and region (where in the country the respondent lived: NE, S, NC, W).

With large sample sizes, finding statistically significant differences between groups becomes relatively easy and may not reflect the intensity of the actual differences. Because of the large sample size and the consequent increased sensitivity to levels of statistical significance, we decided to use "effect sizes," which more accurately represent the magnitude of differences between the groups. Effect sizes also give a more accurate description of how different the groups are (Cohen, 1988). Effect size is determined by dividing the differences in the group means by the total group standard deviation and addresses the question "How large is the difference between these groups?" Generally, an effect size of .8 (representing a mean difference of .8 standard deviations or greater) is considered to be very large, .5 is considered to be moderate, and .2 is considered to be a small influence (Cohen, 1988).

Part II--Ranking of concerns. The second section of the survey requested that the respondents select the top three issues they felt were the most critical areas of concern, and rank their choice in priority order. The analysis of this section involved a comparison of the priorities set for the middle school and gifted groups.

TABLE 1

MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY CLUSTER ITEMS WITH CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Clusters	Summary Statements	Alphas
GROUPING PRACTICES	GIFTED STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM BEING GROUPED TOGETHER	.71
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AS GIFTED CAUSES SOCIAL DIFFICULTY	.61
CURRICULUM	THE REGULAR MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IS CHALLENGING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS	.66
*PROGRAM DIFFERENTIATION	THE PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR GIFTED STUDENTS COULD BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS	
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	CURRENT PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED DO ADDRESS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GIFTED STUDENTS	.59
TEACHER PREPARATION	TEACHERS AT THE MIDDLE GRADE LEVEL NEED ADDITIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS	.67
IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS	CURRENT IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES NEED TO BE IMPROVED	.21
*COLLABORATION BETWEEN REGULAR AND GIFTED EDUCATION	LITTLE COLLABORATION TAKES PLACE BETWEEN EDUCATORS IN REGULAR AND GIFTED EDUCATION ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	
*TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS	THE BEST TEACHERS ARE ASSIGNED TO TEACH THE GIFTED STUDENTS	
PROGRAM EVALUATION	EVALUATION OF GIFTED PROGRAMS HAS BEEN ADEQUATE	.69

*NO ALPHAS FOR THESE AS THEY ARE INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

Part III--Additional Comments. We reviewed the responses submitted for themes, and identified eight themes. The themes included comments on: need for teacher preparation; identification issues; general problems like scheduling, funding, and limitations; emphasis on all students, not just gifted; grouping strategies; concern for gifted within the middle school philosophy; comments regarding the survey itself; and justifications for their responses. We categorized the comments and coded them according to these themes. A second coder then read and coded the comments to check for consistency, and we compared the themes across groups.

Results

The return rate for the survey indicated a high level of interest in the issues being addressed. With the second mailing our return rate reached 84%. This means that 336 of the 400 recipients returned the survey. Although we received a return of 336 surveys, we could include only 306 of these in the data analysis. We rejected 30 surveys for a variety of reasons: (a) responses were not clearly marked; (b) respondent had multiple selections for one stem item; (c) the group affiliation of the respondent was unknown; and (d) the respondents returned the survey unanswered indicating that they felt unqualified to respond. Thus, the actual percentage of surveys analyzed was 77%, with 142 responses from the middle school group and 164 from the gifted group.

Figure 1 presents the mean scores and effect sizes for the two groups on the 10 clusters of items in the survey. There seemed to be clear differences between the way educators from middle schools and educators of gifted students view some issues on the education of gifted middle grades learners. Most of these differences are differences of "degree" or intensity of feeling; however, some of the differences are polarized representing truely different opinions of the agree versus disagree

Figure 1

Comparisons of Means for Gifted and Middle School Respondents on Survey Clusters

dimensions. We present the results by the item clusters, followed by the rankings of most important concerns and the analysis of the comments respondents submitted.

Cluster Item Responses

We present the results for the 10 cluster areas in the order of the magnitude of effect size.

1. Grouping Practices. This cluster dealt with whether gifted students should be educated within a heterogeneous or a homogeneous grouping. The summary statement this cluster addressed was:

   GIFTED STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM BEING GROUPED TOGETHER

   This issue showed the widest discrepancy between the groups. Educators from the middle school group felt that gifted students may not benefit from ability grouping, where as educators from the gifted group felt that grouping was important to meet the needs of gifted learners. The effect size of 1.76 indicates that these are markedly different viewpoints on this issue, which clearly separated these groups of educators.

2. Social Development. This item cluster focused on self image and peer relations. A summary statement for this cluster would be:

   IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AS GIFTED CAUSES SOCIAL DIFFICULTY

   Educators from the middle school agreed with this statement. Their feelings seemed to be that the "gifted" label and accompanying special program often create social adjustment problems for the gifted students. The educators of gifted students disagreed with this statement, feeling that "giftedness" does not necessarily interfere with social development, and that the label and services provided might assist gifted students with their

social adjustment. An effect size of 1.39 indicated a major separation in the groups.

3. Curriculum. These items addressed whether or not the regular middle school curriculum could meet the needs of gifted students. The summary statement would be:

   THE REGULAR MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IS CHALLENGING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

   Both groups felt that the standard curriculum is not challenging enough for gifted students; however the strength of this perception varied by group. Although the middle school educators disagreed with this statement, the educators of gifted students "strongly" disagreed. With an effect size of 1.07, this difference in intensity seemed important.

4. Program Differentiation. These items addressed the question as to whether or not the differentiated program now offered to gifted students could benefit ALL students. The summary state was:

   THE PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR GIFTED STUDENTS COULD BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS

   The middle school educators voiced strong agreement with this sentiment, where as the educators of gifted students expressed mild agreement, feeling that, to some extent, components of the program for gifted students would be good for others as well. The effect size of .89 indicates that these groups differed in their intensity of agreement with the statement.

5. Emotional Support. These items dealt with whether or not sufficient support and guidance were available to gifted middle grades learners to meet their emotional needs. A summary for this cluster was:

   CURRENT PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED ADEQUATELY ADDRESS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

   Both groups agreed with this statement. However, the educators of gifted students strongly agreed that programs for gifted students address the emotional needs of the students; and that sufficient social support and attention to their affective development is included in programs for gifted students. The large effect size (.85) indicates that the intensity of feelings differs for the groups.

6. Teacher Preparation. This set of items addressed whether or not teachers of middle grades students have enough preparation to meet the needs of gifted students. The sense here was that there is need for more staff development and support for teachers to assist them in meeting the needs of gifted students in their classes. The summary statement was:

   TEACHERS AT THE MIDDLE GRADES NEED ADDITIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

   While both groups agreed with this, the teachers of gifted students strongly agreed. The effect size of .64 indicates a moderate difference in the intensity of agreement between the groups. This area seems to be a point of mutual concern and may be a point of future collaboration as well.

7. Identification of Gifted Students. This cluster looked at two issues--the failure of current practices to recognize underachieving gifted students,

and the need for student identification in order to assure appropriate services. The summary statement was:

CURRENT IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES NEED TO BE IMPROVED

There was overall agreement in this area. However, the focus was slightly different. The middle school educators felt that current practices overlook many students whereas the educators of gifted students focused on the need for identification to assure services. The moderate effect size of .59 indicates that the groups reported fairly similar views on these issues.

8. Collaboration Between Regular and Gifted Education. These items address the degree of collaboration between these two groups of teachers and administrators on curriculum development. The summary statement was:

   LITTLE COLLABORATION TAKES PLACE BETWEEN EDUCATORS IN REGULAR AND GIFTED EDUCATION ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

   This area seemed particularly important, given the middle schools philosophical emphasis on interdisciplinary units and the inclusion of thinking strategies within the curriculum. Both of these areas have been extensively used in planning differential education for gifted students. The groups agree that little collaboration has taken place, and the effect size (.23) indicated that their feelings are quite similar on this issue. Both groups seemed to feel that collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

9. Teacher Assignments. These items stated the criticism that "gifted" programs get the "best" teachers. The summary statement was:

   THE "BEST" TEACHERS ARE ASSIGNED TO TEACH THE GIFTED STUDENTS

We included this cluster because it is a complaint sometimes voiced; however, the group responses indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. Both groups fell in the "no opinion" category, indicating that excellent teachers, as well as poor teachers, can be found in all areas of education. The effect size of .12 indicated no real difference between the groups on this item.

10. Program Evaluation. These items explored the program assessment for special groups of students. The summary statement was:

EVALUATION OF GIFTED PROGRAMS HAS BEEN ADEQUATE

Both groups disagreed with this statement, indicating that program evaluation is an area that needs attention, and there was no difference between the groups on this cluster.

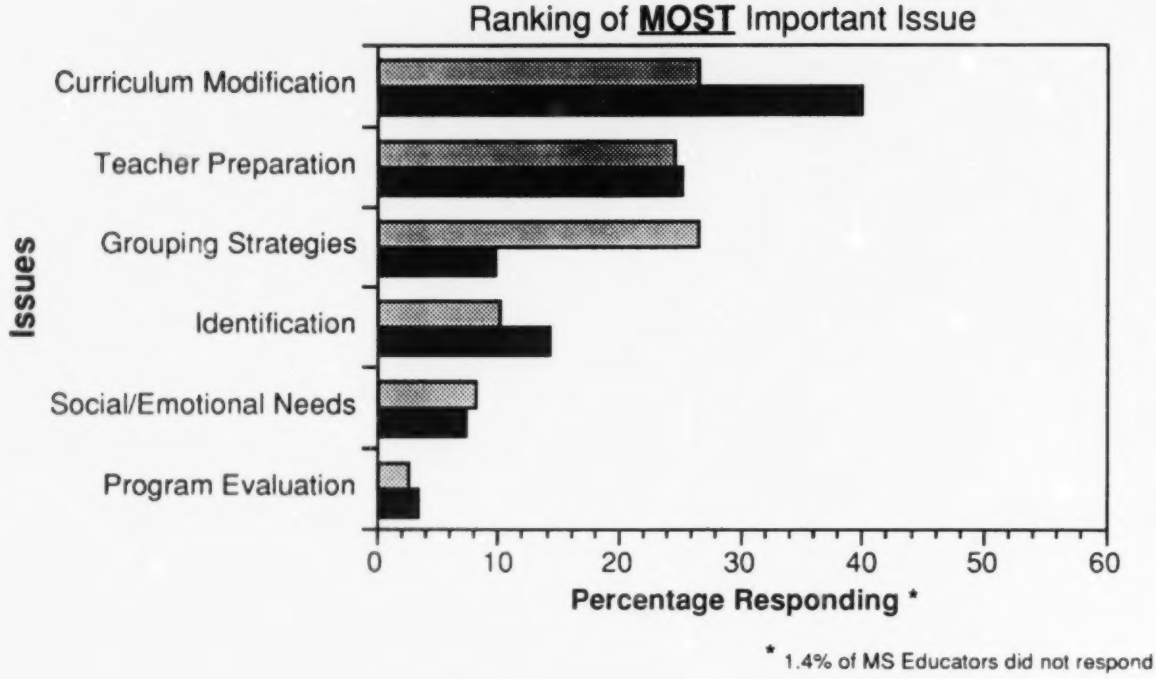
Ranking Most Important Issues

The second section of the survey asked respondents to select the three issues they felt were most in need of attention and to rank their choices in priority. Figure 2 shows the comparison of the priorities for the middle school and gifted education groups. The comparison for the most important issue revels a consensus that attention to curriculum, and teacher preparation are felt to be essential. The middle school educators placed grouping as the second most important issue to address; however the gifted education respondents ranked attention to identification practices as a higher priority than grouping.

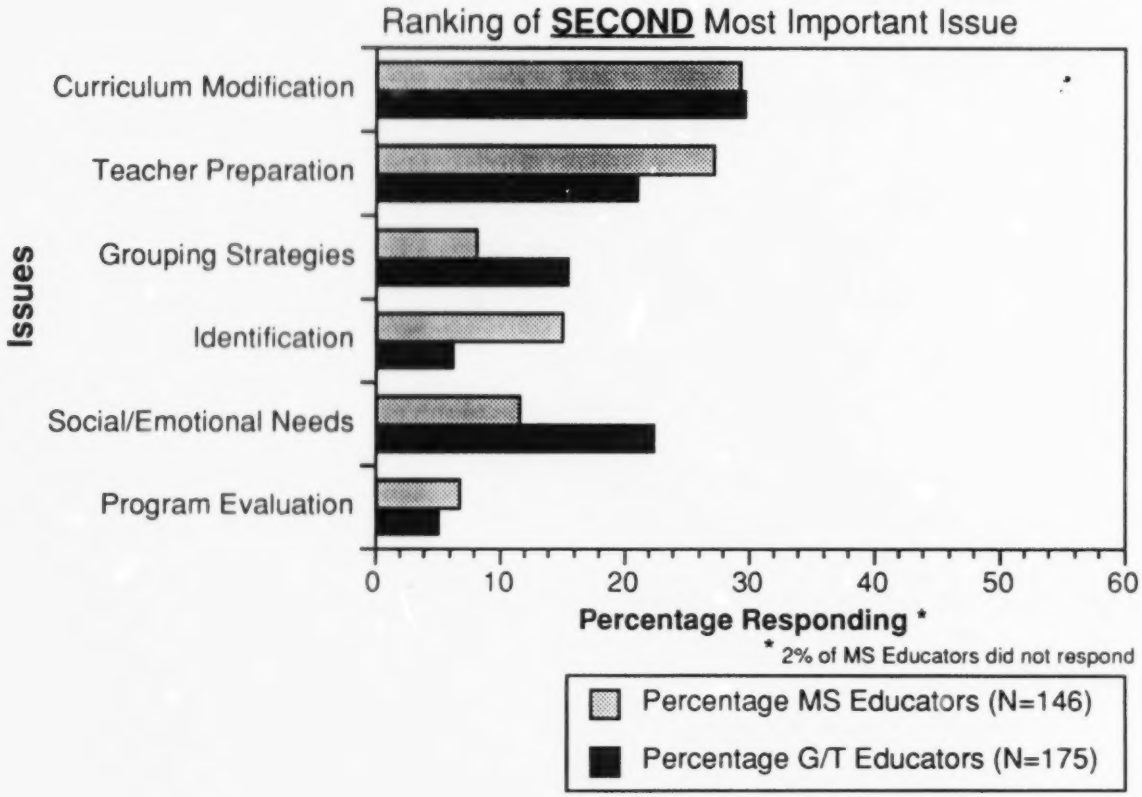
The ranking of the second most important issue once again shows consensus between the two groups, that curriculum and teacher preparation are very important. This reinforces the need to address these concerns. The respondents from the middle school group ranked identification practices as the second most important

Figure 2

Important Issues when Using the Middle School Model with Gifted Students



* 1.4% of MS Educators did not respond



* 2% of MS Educators did not respond

issue, and when this is viewed in relation to the gifted educators ranking it as a first priority, this issue also stands out. Respondents from gifted education profession identified social and emotional needs as a priority, followed by grouping strategies. Overall the issues identified by both groups as priorities include curriculum, teacher preparation, identification practices, and grouping strategies. The slightly different emphasis on grouping practices between the groups further accentuates the differences on this issue, which emerged in the cluster item analysis.

Results of Additional Comments

The third section of the survey invited the respondents to make any additional comments concerning their survey responses. This section also encouraged the use of additional paper if needed. We read the comments and categorized them according to six themes that emerged (see Table 2). Table 3 shows the types of responses received by both groups.

Table 2

Middle School Qualitative Comments

Categories	MS (N=51) N	MS (N=51) %	Gifted (N = 85) N	Gifted (N = 85) %
1. Need for personnel preparation, information and materials	9	18	15	18
2. Identification concerns	4	8	12	14
3. General problems (scheduling funding, space, w/ parents, admin. other teachers, grading	9	18	16	19
4. Emphasis on all students	20	40	6	7
5. Grouping				
a. heterogeneous	10	20	6	7
b. homogeneous	3	6	8	10
6. Concerns for gifted in middle school philosophy	1	2	20	24
Sum of Responses	56		83	

*41% of respondents made additional comments
65% of these are gifted
38% of these are middle school

* Estimating number of total surveys received/used

Table 3
Respondents' Comments

Categories	Middle School	Gifted
Need for Training	The teacher is the key. All teachers must be trained in successful use of strategies to meet student needs. Gifted students must be recognized for their gifts and encouraged to use them. The future depends upon well educated, emotionally self-sufficient, socially well adjusted adults. I believe in this model; however, without training to "pull it off," gifted children won't get the challenge they need--neither will anyone else. This model strongly relies on the cooperative efforts of parents and teachers to provide for all children's education	I feel it is essential to involve the classroom teacher in the education of the gifted middle school student. Educators of gifted children need to find a program "niche" within current reform and restructuring efforts--and within the "middle school" design. Materials appropriate for gifted adolescents are lacking and difficult to integrate within current curricular initiatives in the content areas. Staff development should be a first priority.
Identification Concerns	Because of the quick changes that occur developmentally in middle school student, some student are excluded from enrichment because they didn't test well a year or two before. Assessment needs to be done frequently.	The identification issue is one applicable across the K-12 spectrum, not only of concern at the middle school level. In fact, most middle schools take data collected at the elementary level and simply continue or discontinue service based on student interest and/or perceived need. True identification at the middle school level is an exception, not the rule.
General Problems	The program at our school (of 12 years) was eliminated (budget cuts). It's appalling that successful programs for gifted students are the "first to go."	Funding cuts seem to end programs no matter how effective scheduling. Gifted programs receives a very low priority often subjecting students to a choice between participation in a favorite musical or athletic program. Current staff has little idea of how to adequately differentiate curriculum no matter how challenging for gifted students. Senior administrators are generally uninformed and lack support for programs.

Categories	Middle School	Gifted
		Since the middle school philosophy stresses a student centered approach, principals are assuming that all students' needs are being addressed individually (therefore, no need for gifted programming!).
Emphasis on All Students	Many of the issues you raise are appropriate issues for all types of students. The middle school needs to look at how best to meet the educational, emotional, and social needs of all students. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students must have input into this process. "Curriculum modification" that ensures gifted MS kids will reach their potential should also work for all students. I think it's possible, if you take a more strategic, less skills-oriented approach.	Middle school is a key age during which abilities/gifts can/should blossom in new kids and ways. The curriculum needs to be strong, challenging and experimental for all kids--so all learn to the max. of their potential. rescue middle grades from its "wasteland" reputation and put the best teachers, curriculum there.
Grouping--(Homogeneous)	Gifted students should be heterogeneously grouped some of the day and homogeneously grouped with gifted peers some of the day. They need both.	Concern that movement away from ability grouping will hurt development of gifted students. We must accommodate these differences so gifted students do not lose ground academically.
Grouping--(Heterogeneous)	Segregation of gifted students should be kept to a minimum and peer tutoring should be their choice not their assignment. If teachers were adequately trained to meet the needs of gifted students, it should be possible in a heterogeneous classroom.	I see my middle school role expanding to serve as a resource to teaching teams. Constant communication with these teams allows me to help my gifted students in their regular classrooms.

Categories	Middle School	Gifted
Concerns for Gifted in MS Philosophy		If students are neither challenged by curriculum nor peers, they are, in fact, being taught to underachieve. They will not be prepared to cope with challenging curriculum beyond high school and will feel inadequate compared to students who have had more challenging curriculums. Furthermore, their misuse as teachers or tutors of other students will only provide an inflated self-concept and will indeed make them feel "elitist" or superior.

Discussion

For a constructive dialogue between educators working with the middle school movement and those in gifted education, an understanding of where viewpoints coincide and where they differ can be helpful. The survey results indicated that while there are differing viewpoints on several issues, these differences are often in degree or intensity, and are not fundamental differences that polarize the groups. In addition to the areas of difference, several areas emerged that indicate clear agreement and that can help guide collaborative efforts.

Two major areas elicited important group differences: the grouping of students by ability, and the effect of such grouping practices on social development. Doing away with ability grouping seems to have become a focal point for some middle school educators as a way to eliminate "tracking" of students (Oakes, 1985; George, 1988). In response to "tracking," some educators have suggested we eliminate all forms of grouping, including grouping by ability for instructional purposes, and in some cases, special programs for gifted students have been singled out (Oakes, 1992; Allan, 1991). The research on grouping for instructional purposes should be carefully reviewed to gain an understanding of the impact that grouping strategies can have on a variety of student outcomes. The impact seems to differ depending on the types of students and programs; this indicates that there is not a single answer to this issue for all students (Kulik & Kulik, 1990; Slavin, 1990). The decision on how to group students for learning requires a thoughtful discussion, and careful review of the research, to assure that the instructional needs of all students, including gifted learners have been addressed.

The concern for the social development of middle grade students is also highlighted within the middle school philosophy and the survey results show some differences in beliefs about the social impact of labeling students "gifted." The label

and inclusion in special programs is seen as a potential source of social difficulty for gifted students by educators within the middle school movement, whereas those within gifted education feel that this is not necessarily the case. This issue is complex and although there do seem to be some social repercussions to the label "gifted" (Buescher, 1985, Coleman & Cross, 1988), there are other strongly positive development outcomes for appropriate inclusion in special programs for gifted students (Coleman, Cross, & Terhaar-Yonkers, 1991; Gallagher, Coleman, & Staples, 1989). No single answer will suffice in meeting all the social needs of gifted middle grade learners.

Although there were areas indicated by the survey where points of view differed, there were also several areas that showed shared perspectives. In looking further at points on which middle school and gifted education held similar views, the survey results identified several shared goals (Coleman & Gallagher, 1992). These shared goals (see Table 4), drawn from the literature of both gifted and middle school education, and may lay the foundation for communication. When viewed with the results from this survey, they help to frame out an agenda for collaboration between middle school and gifted education.

The clear agreement between both groups of survey respondents that the regular curriculum for middle grades students is not challenging enough for gifted students sends a signal that in order to meet the educational needs of the gifted, there is need for some modifications. The agreement that some of the components of the program for gifted students would benefit other students as well, provides another opportunity for collaboration. However, the strongest messages may be the agreement between these groups that more staff development is needed to meet the academic and social needs of gifted students at the middle grades and that collaboration between middle schools and gifted education programs would be mutually beneficial.

Table 4

Shared Goals of Middle School and Gifted Education

1. To meet the varied developmental needs of students
2. To develop and use interdisciplinary curriculum
3. To use team teaching and team planning
4. To use exploratory curriculum in the classroom
5. To allow each student to work at his/her own pace
6. To use Outcome Based Assessment or Mastery Learning
7. To emphasize thinking strategies and decision making within the curriculum
8. To allow teacher/student relationships to be more intimate, and to provide students with "families" within schools
9. To have teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than disseminators of knowledge
10. To extend learning beyond the textbook

Coleman & Gallagher, (April, 1992).

Recommendations

The survey results indicate some clear starting points for communication and collaboration between educators in the middle school and educators of gifted students. Although the focus of this report has been on the needs of gifted students and the recommendations will address their needs, we realize that many of the following suggestions would be appropriate for all middle grade students. The following directions would seem to be warranted:

1. Initiating joint efforts between middle school and gifted educators to provide teacher preparation to ensure that all middle school teachers have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of gifted middle grades students
2. Planning collaborative interdisciplinary curriculum development with a twofold focus: (a) on strategies to ensure an appropriate pace and challenging level of learning for gifted middle grades learners, and (b) on ways to extend some of the experiences provided through the gifted program to other students who could benefit from them (e.g., activities to enhance problem solving, enrichment field trips, opportunities for independent/interest centered learning)
3. Creating ways, at the building level, to address the affective needs of middle grades gifted students through teaming, counseling programs, and advisee-advisor relationships designed to assist gifted youngsters with their social and emotional growth
4. Exploring a variety of ways to group students for instructional purposes which match the needs of the students and the requirements of the curriculum to ensure challenging experiences for gifted students

5. Designing and using program assessment strategies that can measure the full range and depth of gifted students in order to evaluate the effectiveness of services for gifted middle grades learners.

It is reassuring to note from our survey results that educators from both middle school and gifted backgrounds share many of the same concerns. We believe that combining the knowledge and expertise of both groups will result in an exciting collaboration that benefits many students across the middle school and gifted populations.

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Appendix A

Initial Questionnaire to Develop Survey Areas

DRAFT

Issues and Concerns for Appropriate Education of Middle Grade Gifted Students

Date: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ FAX: _____

_____ I am sorry, I will be unable to assist you in this project.

In thinking about appropriate educational services to meet the needs of gifted middle grade students, list five issues or concerns which you feel should be addressed as we try to blend the goals of middle schools and programs for gifted students. (Please explain your concerns.):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

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Appendix B

Middle School Survey

Middle School Survey

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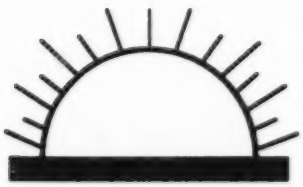
James J. Gallagher, Director

Mary Ruth Coleman, Associate Director

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Fax #: _____



Gifted **E**ducation **P**olicy **S**tudies **P**rogram

Part I: Areas of Concern

The following issues have been raised as areas of concern in meeting the needs of gifted middle grade students. THESE ISSUES REPRESENT A VARIETY OF OPINIONS AND YOU MAY OR MAY NOT AGREE WITH ANY GIVEN CONCERN. Please think about each concern and mark your level of concordance for each item along the following scale:.

Rating Scale

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4	No Opinion N

Please circle the number which best reflects your feelings on each issue.

1.	Placing students into ability groups creates an artificially stratified school, dividing students by race and economic status.	1	2	3	4	N
2.	Gifted students who are heterogeneously grouped for academic subjects may not be able to advance at their own learning rate.	1	2	3	4	N
3.	Scheduling at the middle grades creates problems for students who must give up other choices in order to participate in gifted programs (e.g., band, is scheduled at the same time as gifted classes).	1	2	3	4	N
4.	Students who are gifted may be over-used as peer tutors and/or junior teachers when they are placed in heterogeneous classes.	1	2	3	4	N
5.	Gifted students who are <u>not</u> placed with regular students the majority of the school day, will not be prepared to understand how the "real world" operates.	1	2	3	4	N
6.	Current identification procedures for middle school gifted classes often do not recognize gifted students who are underachieving, culturally different, or economically disadvantaged.	1	2	3	4	N
7.	The label "gifted" may cause feelings of social elitism.	1	2	3	4	N
8.	Gifted students who need curriculum modifications to reach their potential will probably <u>not</u> get the services they require without formal identification.	1	2	3	4	N
9.	Interdisciplinary curriculum may still need to be made more advanced and sophisticated than the traditional curriculum in order to challenge students who are gifted.	1	2	3	4	N
10.	Although educators of gifted students may have been involved with curriculum designed to teach higher order thinking, decision making, and interest centered learning, they may <u>not</u> have been active in helping to integrate these ideas into the mainstream middle school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	N

11.	Current programs designed for middle school gifted students could benefit **all** students, not just gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
12.	Middle school textbooks and materials generally used to teach students on grade level may **not** challenge gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
13.	"Mastery" oriented curriculum may focus on basic-skills hierarchies and avoid the more sophisticated learning outcomes which are appropriate for gifted students.	1	2	3	4	N
14.	Few teachers of middle school students have been specifically educated to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.	1	2	3	4	N
15.	Teachers may not have been given enough preparation in strategies designed to meet the needs of **all** students within heterogeneous classes.	1	2	3	4	N
16.	The teachers who are considered the "best" are assigned to teach the highest level students leaving "weaker" teachers to instruct the others.	1	2	3	4	N
17.	Programs for middle school gifted students have **not** shown their effectiveness through evaluation of program outcomes.	1	2	3	4	N
18.	Programs for middle school gifted students have been loosely organized, with little attention paid to goals and objectives which can be measured, to ensure accountability.	1	2	3	4	N
19.	Current programs for gifted students at the middle school level do **not** provide enough social and emotional support to gifted culturally different students to encourage their participation.	1	2	3	4	N
20.	Guidance counselors are **not** knowledgeable enough about the unique needs of gifted students to effectively help them with their social and emotional development.	1	2	3	4	N
21.	Without extended contact with a wide variety of students, gifted students may not develop adequate peer relations.	1	2	3	4	N
22.	If gifted students are **not** sufficiently challenged academically, they may not develop a positive self image.	1	2	3	4	N
23.	Gifted students who are given responsibilities for peer teaching may begin to resent their teachers and their less able peers.	1	2	3	4	N

Please continue on to the back page.

Part II: Most Important Issues

The concerns listed in Part I of this survey address the following six questions. Please identify the three most important questions which you feel need to be addressed, in order to more effectively meet the needs of gifted middle school students. Please list your three in priority order, by letter.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

A. What grouping strategies are most appropriate for gifted middle school students?

B. What identification strategies are most appropriate for gifted middle school students?

C. What curriculum modifications should be made to ensure gifted middle school students reach their potential?

D. What steps need to be taken to ensure adequate teacher preparation in meeting the needs of gifted middle school students?

E. What kinds of program evaluations should be undertaken to assess middle school gifted students?

F. What steps should be taken to ensure that the social and emotional needs of gifted middle school students are met?

Part III: Additional Concerns

Feel free to write **additional comments** which you feel would help us better understand your attitudes and position(s) on any of these issues. If we have left out any **concerns** of yours, please indicate them. Also, please include your **ideas** on how these issues might be most appropriately addressed. Use additional paper as needed.

Thank you for taking the time to help us with this effort. We are grateful for your assistance.

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